

Points of Reference for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

(revised September 13, 2016)

1. The former terms, “*Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist*” or “*Eucharistic Minister*” no longer apply. Please remember that now you have been commissioned as an “**Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion**,” for a period of service for 3 years. Graciously accept the fact that when your term expires, your service ends (unless your term has been extended or you’re re-commissioned). This is a “privilege,” not an “entitlement to which you have a right.” You may be re-commissioned, have your term extended for another year, or deputized for an emergency situation. Marriage outside of the Church disqualifies you for such service.
2. If extra priests, concelebrants or deacons are present at Mass (regular ministers), please be gracious enough to allow them to fulfill their role as **Ordinary Ministers** to distribute Holy Communion (if necessary, in your place). Your proper title is **Extraordinary** Minister of Holy Communion. You might be able to direct him to your place of distribution before returning to your seat; they have priority.
3. You are commissioned as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for your parish only. If you are attending a Mass at another parish, you may serve there only if that priest, out of a real necessity, specifically deputizes you for that particular occasion.
4. Always be conscious of your role as an “Extraordinary Minister” of Holy Communion, and be careful about your references to the Eucharist. It is no longer “bread,” but the **Body of Christ**; it is not simply “wine,” but the **Precious Blood**.
5. Dignified attire is always worn when distributing the Eucharist at Mass; suitable attire is also called for when carrying the Eucharist to the sick or homebound. Shorts, T-shirt, jeans, cut-offs and plunging necklines are not considered dignified. Do not attempt to distribute Communion if not properly attired. Your manner of dress should not distract, in any way, the hearts and minds of those receiving the Eucharist. This includes the use of strong perfumes and colognes.
6. At the Lamb of God, you may approach the sanctuary and wait before the steps until the celebrant has received from the chalice. When he is receiving from the chalice, you may come to the top level of the sanctuary. Do not come onto the rug marking the sacred space of the sanctuary between the altar and tabernacle, but stand to either side of it and wait to receive Holy Communion there.
7. After your reception of Holy Communion, see if you can assist the priest in giving the other ministers the Precious Blood at the altar before going to your assigned place. He will usually notify you of this.
8. When you present the host to the communicant, please hold the host very briefly while proclaiming it, “The Body of Christ.” The same is done in passing the cup, as you say, “The Blood of Christ.” Do not add anything to the proclamation (such as the name of the recipient), for that contradicts the moment of *proclamation*, which is to all present (and also ignores the people whose name you may not know, and thus makes an ‘elitism’ out of the moment); this clashes with the concept of Sacramental unity.
9. Some people prefer to receive the Eucharist on their tongue and some in their hand. But communicants may not take the host and dip it into the Precious Blood (intinction).
10. Please do not take offense if someone leaves your line to take Communion from a priest; accept it.

11. Some people have allergies to different types of wheat hosts used at Mass. Please be sensitive to their needs and minister accordingly, guiding them to the Precious Blood if they cannot receive the host.
12. If you should drop the Eucharist, reverently pick it up and insert it between the knuckles of the hand holding the ciborium and continue with distribution of Holy Communion. When you return the ciborium to the sanctuary, let the priest or deacon know that the host was dropped. It will be placed in a bowl of water near the tabernacle to dissolve and then dispensed in the sacrarium.
13. If you are a minister of the cup (Precious Blood), please wipe the cup carefully and turn it slightly after each reception of the Precious Blood. Please be careful about possible spillage. If you should spill some on the floor, note its location and reposition yourself so that no one steps on the spot. Inform the priest, deacon or sacristan so that they can properly purify the spot after communion or Mass.
14. Please note that some people receive Communion in the hand in a less-than-reverent way. Where possible, don't allow them to abuse the privilege (e.g., by passing the host or cup to others, such as little children). Don't give the host or chalice to someone chewing gum. Ask them to remove the gum first.
15. Communicants who receive the host in the hand, are to step aside, put it to their mouth and return to their place. If you see someone doing otherwise, get his or her attention, or the attention of the priest if you suspect any abuse.
16. If someone gets in line but is not receiving Holy Communion, they may demonstrate this by crossing their heart and bowing their head. Members of Easter Catholic Churches receive Holy Communion this way, too, so please be alert. You may extend your hand and say, "May God bless you." Do not sign with the cross. An inquisition is not necessary at this moment, though a simple question may avoid confusion for you, if you feel the person might not be of our faith experience.
17. Be alert to any need to help others at their station after Communion distribution at your station is completed. Then return to the sanctuary and wait until the priest has closed the tabernacle door.
18. After Communion at Mass, bring all ciboria still containing hosts to the sanctuary area for the priest or deacon to carry farther. If you have Precious Blood remaining in the chalice, do not self communicate, but either place it on the altar for the priest or deacon to consume, or offer it to another minister on the side. Cover the cup with the purificator when moving about in order to prevent possible spillage.
19. You may be called upon to take the empty chalice or ciboria to the credence table for later purification after Mass. Also, be available to the priest for consumption of extra Precious Blood at the end of Communion. After Mass, you may assist in bringing back the sacred vessels to the sacristy for further purification.
20. In accord with the dignity of your office, please refrain from all distracting or needless conversation when carrying the Holy Eucharist. Please keep your hands clean for service, and especially wash them before and after serving Holy Communion to the sick, in particular, in hospitals and nursing homes.
21. You may take Holy Communion to the homebound, but you are not to bless anyone with the Eucharist. At the conclusion of your ministering of Communion, you may ask God's blessing upon the persons receiving Holy Communion. The sick are exempt from the **one-hour Eucharistic fast** in an institution, and the same applies to those ministering to them and those present and attending them in their illness. A second reception of Holy Communion that day is allowed on this occasion.

22. In bringing Holy Communion to the sick or homebound (or in institutions) care must be taken so that the rite is not diminished to the absolute minimum. Please follow the ritual for proper administration of Holy Communion. If you're in the hospital visiting several patients, you may use the abbreviated form.
23. When taking the Eucharist to the sick, do not put the Eucharist in your pocketbook or purse, nor in a handkerchief nor your pants/shirt pocket. It should be kept in a pyx (proper Eucharistic conveyance), carried in a specially-designed burse near your heart. The pyx should be given to the priest in the sacristy before Mass or placed on the altar before Mass. Go to your destination without detour and delay. Do not stop and place the pyx aside for some other reason, e.g., conversation, meal, etc.
24. If there are excess hosts from your visit to the sick, please return them to the tabernacle. If this is impossible because you cannot obtain the key, then you may distribute them to fellow Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion or other Catholics rather than consuming them yourself. This last attempt (self-communicating) is only permitted in an **extreme** situation to avoid abuse.
25. When you are visiting the hospital, please remember to note the name of the patient when you have finished distributing Holy Communion. Make an entry in the book in the sacristy set aside for that purpose (of those to whom you gave Holy Communion) and also inform the parish office or a priest if there is a need for the sick person to see a priest.
26. On rare occasions, there may be a need to expose the Blessed Sacrament for Eucharistic Adoration in church. Since you may not bless with the monstrance or the ciborium, just open the tabernacle, and, after genuflecting, place the ciborium on the altar for a period of adoration. Return the ciborium to the tabernacle at the end of the period of exposition (following an appropriate hymn), genuflect, and close the tabernacle door. Make sure that two candles are lit on the altar. The Litany of Divine Praise may be said after you have closed the tabernacle.
27. Communion stations should be planned to properly balance Ministers of the Cups with Ministers of the Ciboria. The table below indicates the suggested distribution.

Weekend Masses		
Total Number of Ministers Including Priest.	Number of Cups	Number of Ciboria
6	0/2*	6/4*
8	4	4
10	4	6
12	6	6
Weekday Masses		
2	1	1
3	2	1
4	2	2
*When Mass attendance is low (<200) consider using the 4 ciboria, 2 cups distribution.		

Weekend Masses



Weekday Masses

